

Draft Environmental Assessment Bull River Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project



**MONTANA FISH,
WILDLIFE & PARKS**



Region 1

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

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Draft Environmental Assessment Checklist

Bull River Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project

July 2021

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Type of Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to conduct forest management activities on the Bull River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA, Figures 1 and 2). The proposed project would include the use of mechanized treatments to remove blowdown trees, reduce conifer stocking around aspen clones to promote growth and regeneration of this species, and reduce hazardous fuels bordering private lands. The project would also include road maintenance work and reclamation activities. Please see #10 (Alternative B – Proposed Action) below, for a detailed description of the proposed action. Timber harvest and associated activities would abide by all applicable laws and Montana Forestry Best Management Practices¹ (BMPs).

2. Need for Action

On January 13, 2021, a major wind event impacted western Montana, resulting in significant blowdown across the Kootenai/Cabinet region, including the BRWMA. The southeastern portion of the BRWMA was impacted to varying degrees, with approximately 120 acres being more heavily impacted (Figure 3). The affected stands are primarily 40 to 65-year old lodgepole pine. The accumulations of downed trees have created a fire hazard and could present a barrier to suppression in the event of a wildfire. The downed trees are also susceptible to bark beetle infestation, especially mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) and pine engraver (*Ips pini*). Potential timber value of the downed trees will rapidly decline from decay and wood-boring insects within the first year.

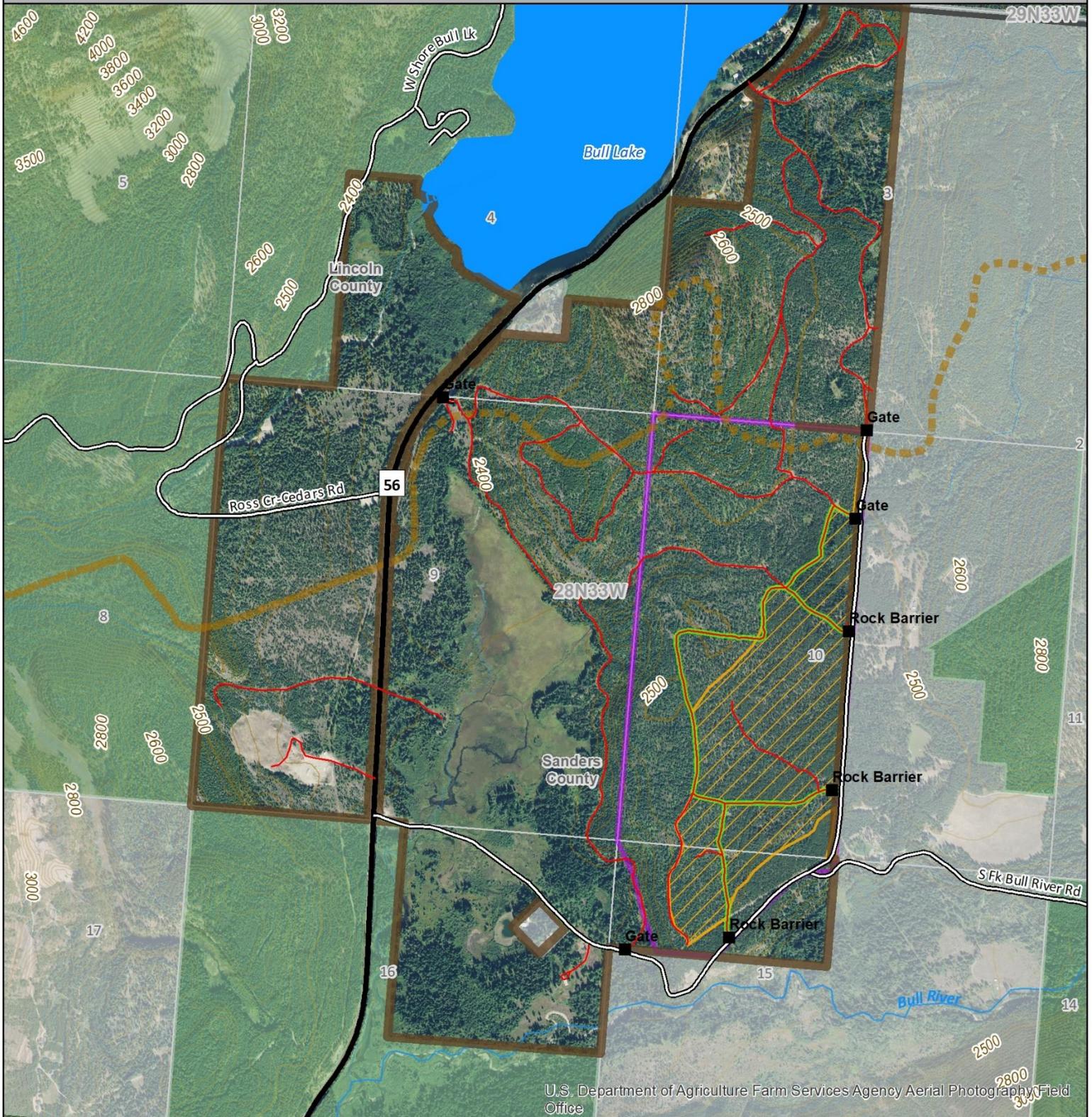
The BRWMA is managed with the primary objective of providing a mosaic of habitat opportunities, with an emphasis on big game species, and to provide compatible recreation opportunities. Additionally, state statute directs FWP to manage its forested lands to mitigate fire hazards and pine beetle infestation, as well as to enhance wildlife habitat. As such, there are additional opportunities to meet multiple objectives while removing the windthrown trees. Within and adjacent to the blowdown, several aspen clones exist that could be promoted by removing standing live conifers to reduce competition for sunlight and water (Figure 4). The eastern property line of the BRWMA shares its border with several private residences. The blowdown trees and dense stands along this boundary could threaten adjacent private lands in the event of a wildfire. Thinning along the eastern property line to create a fuel break could potentially aid in suppression efforts in the event of a wildfire.

¹ Available on DNRC's website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/forestry-assistance/forest-practices/best-management-practices-bmp-2>, accessed 9 June 2021.

Bull River WMA Blowdown Salvage Project

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Figure 1 - Project Area Map



U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency Aerial Photography Field Office

- Road Barriers
- Administrative Road
- Open Road
- Haul Route
- State Highways
- Proposed Treatment (152 acres)
- Gross Project Area (373 acres)
- Wildlife Management Area
- US Forest Service
- Private Lands
- Counties

Scale = 1:20,000



Map Produced by: Jason Parke, FWP Forester
 Habitat Bureau/Wildlife Division
 Bull River WMA Blowdown Salvage Project
 June 9, 2021

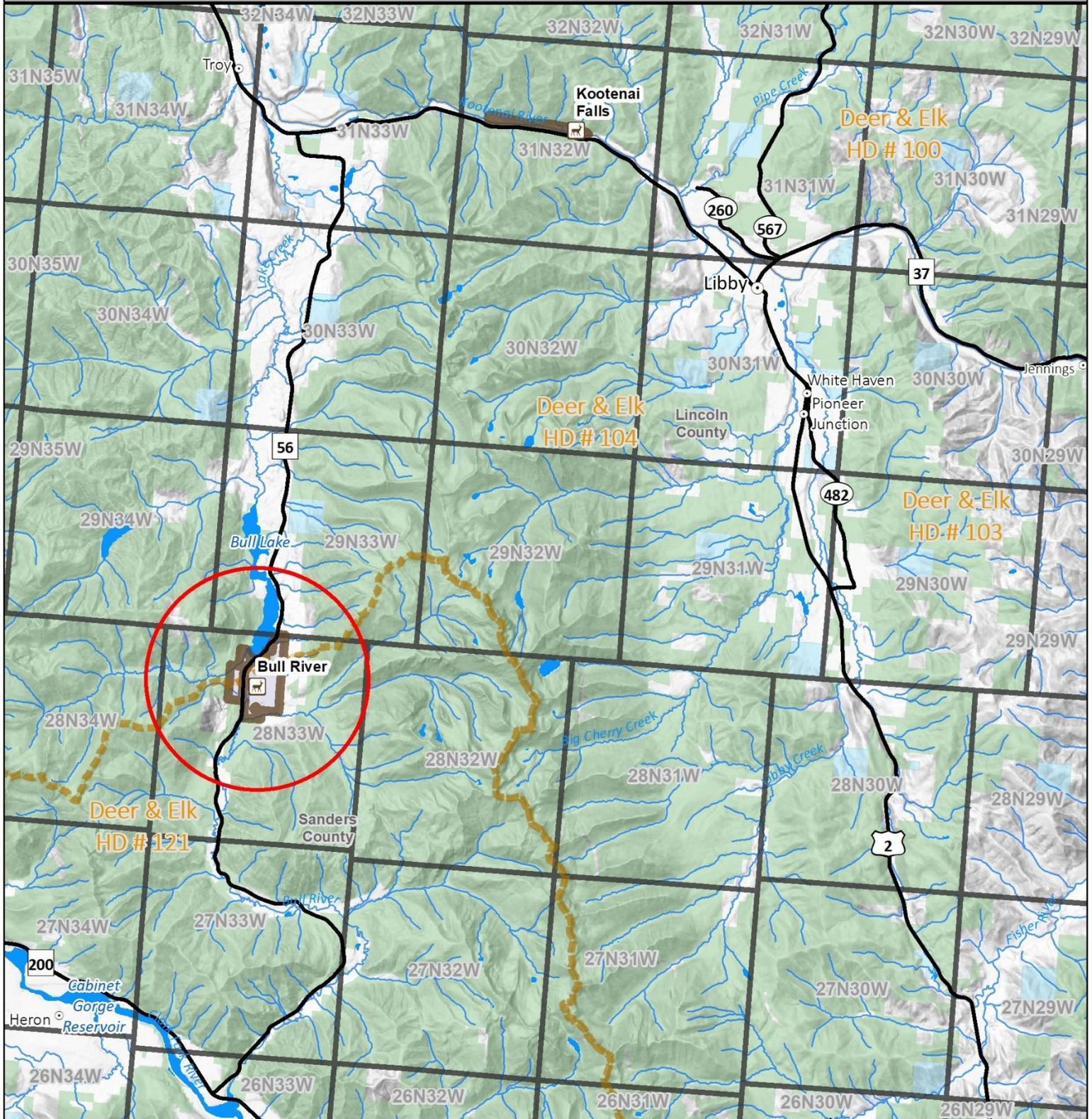


Figure 2 - Vicinity Map

Bull River WMA Blowdown Salvage Project

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Figure 2 - Vicinity Map



- Lakes
- Highways
- Streams
- Hunting Districts (Deer, Elk, Lion)
- US Forest Service
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana State Trust Land
- Wildlife Management Area

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Figure 3 - Area of the Bull River WMA heavily impacted by the January 13th windstorm.



Figure 4 - Aspen clones within the project area are being overtaken by conifers.



3. Name of Project:

Bull River Wildlife Management Area Blowdown Salvage Project

4. Location of Project

The 1,576-acre Bull River Wildlife Management Area (BRWMA) is located 17 air-miles south of Libby, Montana, straddling the Sanders/Lincoln County line (Figure 2). The property borders Bull lake and lies on the hydrologic divide between the Bull River and Lake Creek. The gross project area encompasses 373 acres, with 152 acres proposed for immediate treatment, in portions of Sections 10 & 15 of Township 28 North, Range 33 West.

5. Agency Authority for Proposed Action

FWP is authorized by law to own and manage lands as wildlife habitat. The land subject to this proposal is included in the Bull River Wildlife Management Area, which was purchased in 2005 with sportsman's license dollars, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition, and North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants with additional contributions from The Conservation Fund, Avista Corporation, and Plum Creek Timber Company. FWP uses budgeted license revenues and P-R matching funds, within spending authority granted each biennium by the Montana legislature, for maintenance of the BRWMA. FWP is authorized to use supplemental funds from various public and private sources, which may be awarded under specific conditions for individual maintenance and enhancement projects on the BRWMA and other properties. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission endorsed this proposal on June 24, 2021, allowing FWP to proceed with further development and analysis of this proposed action, including completion of this Environmental Assessment.

87-1-201(9)(a)(iv) and 87-1-621, MCA

FWP is required to implement programs that address fire mitigation, pine beetle infestation, and wildlife habitat enhancement giving priority to forested lands in excess of 50 contiguous acres in any state park, fishing access site, or wildlife management area under the department's jurisdiction. The Montana Legislature has provided FWP the means to accrue revenue from forest management activities and spend them to fund further management projects on its forested lands.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Forest Management Plan² (2018)

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Forest Management Plan directs FWP to manage for desired habitat conditions and public use opportunities while maintaining the ecological integrity of forests. The plan provides a framework for developing desired future conditions (DFCs), identifies mechanical and non-mechanical treatments as management tools to achieve DFCs, and establishes guidelines for implementing forestry treatments on FWP forested lands.

6. Name, address and phone number of project sponsor (if other than the agency): Not Applicable

² Available upon request from R1 FWP (Kalispell) or FWP Wildlife (Helena) office.

7. Anticipated Schedule

Public Comment Period: July 2 – Aug 2, 2021

Decision Notice Published: August 13, 2021

Estimated Commencement Date: December 1, 2021

Estimated Completion Date: March 1, 2022 for the initial timber salvage. In the event of future bark beetle infestations, follow-up treatments may occur through December 2026.

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 30%

8. Project size--estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

Land Type	Affected Area (estimated in acres)
(a) Developed:	
Residential	0
Industrial	0
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/ Recreation	0
(c) Wetlands/ Riparian Areas	0
(d) Floodplain	0
(e) Productive:	
Irrigated Cropland	0
Dry Cropland	0
Forestry	373
Rangeland	0
Other	0

9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) **Permits:** none required

(b) **Funding:** Costs to FWP for implementing the proposed action would be covered by a combination of merchantable timber byproduct, FWP Forest Management Account, and possibly grant funds. Any revenue in excess of project costs will be deposited in the Forest Management Account pursuant to the provisions of § 87-1-621, MCA.

(c) **Other Overlapping Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name:</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility:</u>
Montana Dept. of Nat. Res. & Conservation	Streamside Management Zone Law
U.S. Forest Service	Fire Protection
Sanders County	Weed Management
Montana State Historic Preservation Office	Cultural and Historic Resources

10. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Alternative A: No Action

No timber salvage would be implemented on the BRWMA at this time. Downed trees would remain on the ground indefinitely. Adjacent live stands of trees would be at an increased susceptibility to bark beetle infestations for several years due to the likelihood of increasing bark beetle populations resulting from the infestation of downed trees. Heavy downed fuel would be a fire hazard and present a barrier to fire suppression in the event of a wildfire. Timber value would decline rapidly after the first year from decay and wood boring insects. No aspen enhancement or additional fuels reduction treatments would be undertaken at this time. FWP would not generate revenue from timber harvest for the Forest Management Account.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

FWP is proposing to conduct timber salvage, aspen enhancement, and fuels reduction treatments on approximately 152 acres within the 373-acre gross project area on the BRWMA. FWP is also proposing to monitor bark beetle infestation within the project area and remove infested trees for up to five years (through December 2026). The purpose of this project is to:

- reduce susceptibility of adjacent stands of trees to future bark beetle infestation;
- reduce fuel loading adjacent to private lands east of the BRWMA;
- promote growth and regeneration of aspen;
- Improve quality of habitat for a variety of wildlife including big game and nongame species;
- sell resulting merchantable timber byproducts to offset the cost of tree removal before the trees lose commercial value; and

- if surplus revenue is generated from the project, use those funds to pay for future rehabilitation and forest management on the BRWMA as well as forest management work on other FWP properties across the state.

The proposed treatments are expected to benefit:

- adjacent forested stands that may be affected by increased susceptibility to bark beetle infestations,
- fire suppression efforts in the event of a wildfire,
- compatible public use opportunities (such as hunting),
- big-game winter range and year-round foraging opportunities,
- nongame wildlife species (through the retention of broken top snags, isolated patches of downed wood, and aspen enhancement),
- funding availability for future rehabilitation and forest management on the BRWMA and other forested FWP properties, and
- the local timber industry.

The proposed treatments (Figure 5) would include:

- 152 acres of immediate treatment utilizing mechanized timber harvesting including:
 - 120 acres of removing windthrown trees,
 - 22 acres of aspen enhancement, and
 - 10 acres thinning to create a fuel break,
- monitoring of bark beetle infestation and, if necessary, removal of infested trees within the 373-acre gross project area for five years,
- log hauling and road maintenance on 4.3 miles of existing roads,
- prescribed burning (jackpot, broadcast, and pile burning),
- rehabilitation of disturbed areas (such as grass seeding bare soils),
- noxious weed control, and
- tree planting (if needed).

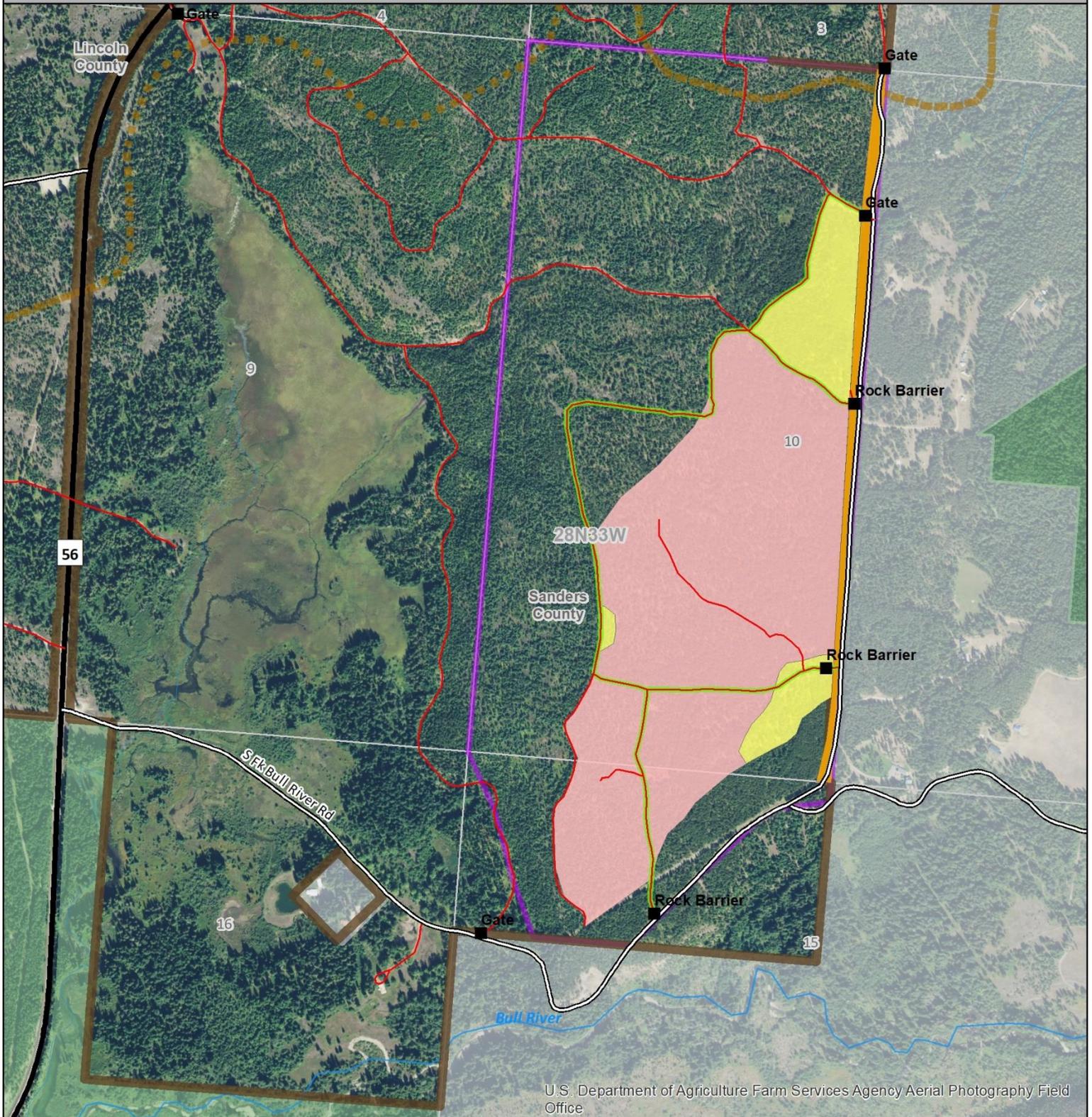
Under this alternative, FWP would hire contractors to remove downed and wind-damaged trees, remove conifers around aspen clones, and thin dense conifer stands along the eastern boundary of the BRWMA. Following the treatment, FWP would continue to monitor bark beetle infestation in adjacent stands and potentially removed infested trees for five years (through December 2026). Removal of infested trees would depend on the economic feasibility of removal. Monitoring and follow-up treatments would be evaluated annually for mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) and pine engraver (*Ips pini*) infestation. Tree removal would be implemented, if deemed necessary, to minimize localized outbreaks.

Tree removal would be accomplished through a combination of mechanized and non-mechanized methods. Merchantable trees would be removed with ground-based logging equipment (such as feller-bunchers and skidders). The trees would be cut and skidded to designated roadside locations (called “landings”). Tree stems would be delimbed and processed into logs. Logs would be loaded onto

Bull River WMA Blowdown Salvage Project

MONTANA FWP

Figure 5 - Treatment Unit Map



U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Services Agency Aerial Photography Field Office

- Windthrow removal (120 acres)
- Aspen enhancement (22 acres)
- Fuel break (10 acres)
- Gross Project Area (373 acres)
- Wildlife Management Area
- US Forest Service
- Road Barriers
- Administrative Road
- Open Road
- State Highways
- Haul Route
- Private Lands

Counties

Scale = 1:12,000



Map Produced by: Jason Parke, FWP Forester
Habitat Bureau/Wildlife Division
Bull River WMA Blowdown Salvage Project
June 14, 2021



log trucks and hauled to local forest product manufacturing facilities. Nonmerchantable trees would be removed through a combination of lop and scatter, pile and burn, and mastication. Slash (the nonmerchantable limbs and tree tops) and cull material generated from this process would be treated by either return-skidding/yarding material into the unit, piling and burning, grinding or chipping, removing the material from the site, or a combination of those methods. Ground disturbance is expected on skid trails and at landing areas. Any ground disturbance (exposed, displaced, or compacted soils) would be rehabbed and reseeded with a native grass seed mix.

Contractors hired to do this work would be required to adhere to Montana Forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs), and FWP would develop a site-specific treatment plan with said contractors. This plan would identify resource protection measures to minimize impacts to the site. FWP would oversee the activities while they are on-going to ensure compliance with the plan and to minimize resource impacts. FWP did not locate any streams within the proposed treatment units. If streams are found, FWP would abide by the Streamside Management Zone³ (SMZ) law to protect streams.

Access to the project areas would be from existing roads. Roads would be upgraded to the extent necessary to facilitate logging and log hauling while meeting BMPs. Temporary “jump-up” roads (relatively short spur roads) may be needed in some areas. These would be located on flat ground where excavation could be avoided. Ground impacts, such as more severe soil compaction or soil exposure, may be greater on these spur roads. These would be reclaimed and blocked to prevent unauthorized motorized use. No changes to current public motorized access are being proposed. Existing road closures may be temporarily removed while the contractor is actively working and replaced following completion of use.

The initial treatment of 152 acres could start as soon as September 1, 2021. Removal of blowdown trees would be the priority. The initial treatment would be expected to be completed by March 1, 2023. The operating period for the proposed treatments would be allowed during the late-summer, fall, and winter months and would be restricted from March 1 to July 1 during early nesting periods of avian species such as great horned owls and great gray owls. Ground-based logging equipment operating off roads would be required to operate under relatively dry, frozen, and/or snow-covered conditions in order to minimize impacts to soil and vegetation. Other clean-up and rehab activities such as road maintenance, slash treatment, prescribed burning, and grass seeding could potentially occur throughout the year. If slash is piled and burned, burn piles would be located in openings away from residual trees and neighboring property lines. Burning would be conducted in accordance with open burning seasons and applicable state and county regulations.

Road work and logging activities would comply with Montana Forestry BMPs and the Montana SMZ law. To minimize the spread of noxious weeds; all equipment would be cleaned and inspected by FWP before moving onto the FWP lands. Exposed bare mineral soils would be reseeded immediately and any weed infestations would be treated with herbicides indefinitely through annual weed management efforts.

³ Available on the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) website at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/docs/assistance/practices/sMZ-guide.pdf>, accessed 4 Feb 2020.

Treatment descriptions:

Windthrow removal – The majority of recently downed and wind-damaged trees would be removed from the proposed treatment unit. Standing trees with obvious wind damage such as lean, root uplift, and trees taller than 20 feet with broken tops would be removed. Unless removal is needed for skid trails, landings, or safety reasons, the following trees would be retained:

- live trees not showing signs of wind damage,
- broken-top trees less than 20 feet tall,
- Douglas-fir greater than 16 inches diameter-at-breast-height (DBH),
- deciduous species (cottonwood, aspen, birch),
- older dead and downed trees, and
- scattered, isolated patches of blown down trees (especially on the western portion of the gross project area) that would be less likely to contribute to increased bark beetle infestation and/or fuel hazard.

Aspen enhancement – Within aspen clones and extending up to 100 feet around live aspen trees, the majority of conifers would be removed. Occasional ponderosa pine, western white pine, and western larch would be retained. Prescribed burning, such as broadcast or jackpot burning, may be applied to stimulate sprouting. Limbs, tops, and submerchantable trees may be left throughout the treatment unit to deter big-game herbivory.

Fuel break – Within approximately 120 feet of the eastern boundary of the BRWMA, trees would be thinned to an approximate average crown spacing of 10 feet. More fire-resistant species would be preferred, such as western larch and ponderosa pine. Deciduous species would also be retained. The treatment would primarily focus on removal of dead and downed trees as well as “ladder fuels”. Ladder fuels are the small and mid-sized trees beneath the crown of overstory trees that create a continuous vertical fuel load from the ground up to the tops of the tallest trees. Ladder fuels provide a pathway for surface fires to evolve into crown fires. The objective of this treatment would be to reduce the susceptibility of the treated area to crown fire.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

1b. Timber harvest would adhere to Montana Forestry BMPs to minimize soil compaction and displacement. Ground-based equipment would be restricted to periods dry, frozen, or snow-covered conditions. Existing skid trails would be utilized if they are in suitable locations to minimize soil physical disturbance.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X		Yes	2ab
b. Creation of objectionable odors?			X		Yes	2ab
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a.)		X				
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

2ab. Prescribed burning would introduce particulate matter into the local airshed which may temporarily affect local air quality. Burning would be conducted in accordance with open burning timing restrictions and comply with slash treatment regulations. Dust may be created from log hauling on existing native surface road. Contract clauses would provide for the use of dust abatement or requiring trucks to reduce speed, if necessary.

3. <u>WATER</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		Yes	3b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		X				
n. Other:						

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Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3b. Treating the subject stands may slightly alter the rate and volume of spring runoff and retained snowpack. Given the limited scale of the project and condition of adjacent stands, this effect is expected to be minor. The project would implement Montana Forestry BMPs to minimize any potential risk of sediment delivery to water resources.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		No	4ab
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		No	4ab
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Vegetation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4ab. The project would decrease the amount of downed/wind-damaged trees on the BRWMA. Many live standing trees, sub-merchantable trees, and snags (dead standing trees) would be retained. Removal of the downed and wind-damaged trees would reduce the susceptibility of adjacent stands to

future bark beetle infestation and mortality and reduce the fuel hazard within the treated area in the event of a wildfire. Aspen may increase where competing conifers are removed.

4e. Ground disturbance associated with road use and maintenance and operating equipment off-road has the potential to create areas that would allow for the establishment or spread of noxious weeds. Noxious weed spread will be mitigated by requiring equipment to be washed and inspected before entering the BRWMA, minimizing ground disturbance through the implementation of Montana Forestry BMPs, reseeding disturbed areas with a native grass seed mix, and implementing noxious weed management treatments.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		Y	5bcd
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?			X		Y	5bcd
d. Introduction of new species into an area?			X		Y	5bcd
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		Y	5g
h. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)			X		Y	5h
i. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		X				
j. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Fish and Wildlife:

5bcd. The project would decrease the amount of downed/wind-damaged trees on the BRWMA. Many live standing trees, sub-merchantable trees, and snags (dead standing trees) would be retained. Aspen may increase where competing conifers are removed. Once complete, the project will increase the diversity and quality of habitat for big game, new and existing birds, and nongame animals. Proposed activities will be stopped by March 1 to mediate for some avian species which establish early spring home ranges (e.g. great horned and great grey owls), and any observed active nests would be left undisturbed until nesting is completed. While proposed treatments may temporarily change seasonal habitat use patterns of elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer, we expect minimal-to-no impacts on populations.

5e. Removal of conifers from within and surrounding aspen groves potentially increases survival of songbirds by creating a movement barrier to nest predators such as pine squirrels. Removal of windthrow trees will re-open access to the area and available forage for big game.

5g. Management activities may temporarily increase stress levels of wildlife for the duration of the project; however, the project is a relatively small scale for big game animals and conditions should return to pre-management levels upon completion.

5h. Grizzly bears are present on the project area when not hibernating, and the proposed action may temporarily disrupt seasonal habitat use patterns within the project area. However, the proposed action is expected to have no impact on overall grizzly bear behavior, populations, or habitat.

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X		No	6ab
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?			X		No	6ab
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Noise/Electrical Effects (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

6ab. Residences are located within 1/4 mile of the project area. The BRWMA is open to the public from May 15 through December 1 annually. Except on designated open roads and county roads, public access to the BRWMA is by non-motorized travel and the area is used in the spring through fall by the public for hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing. Logging and trucking equipment will increase noise levels within the project area during the operating periods.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				

7. <u>LAND USE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Use (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8ac.
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		Yes	8ac.
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Risk/Health Hazards (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

8ac. Timber management activities are inherently dangerous. All contractors would be required to comply with federal and state safety standards for logging operations. Contractors would be required to carry spill kits and, in the event of an oil/fluid spill, be responsible for spill reporting and cleanup.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?			X		No	9de
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X		No	9de
f. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Community Impact (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

9de. This Project will create local jobs while the project is ongoing thus benefiting the successful contractor. Log hauling and contractor traffic will increase during the project. Roads and other infrastructure that will be used by contractors were designed (and will be maintained) to support commercial logging and log transport activities.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?			X		No	10b
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X		No	10d
e. **Define projected revenue sources			X		N/A	10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.			X		N/A	10f
g. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Public Services/Taxes/Utilities (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

10b. The Project will increase state and local tax revenues from the sale of fuel and equipment and from employees' income.

10d. Fuel and electricity will be required to treat stands and process the timber byproduct.

10e. Depending on the market conditions of logging costs, hauling costs, and delivered log prices for forest products at the time the timber is sold, the project may generate revenue for FWP's Forest Management Account to be used for future forest management projects.

10f. Post-treatment maintenance costs may be incurred for prescribed burning, slash disposal, revegetation, and noxious weed treatments. FWP would provide funding for maintenance costs from its Forest Management Account and other authorized sources.

** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		No	11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		X				
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Aesthetics/Recreation (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

11a. Some harvested areas may be visible from adjacent private residences and will be noticeably more open compared to unharvested areas. The aesthetic value of these areas has already been partially altered as a result of the wind event. A mosaic of thinned and unthinned areas will be created within the project area.

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				

12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		X				12d.
e. Other:						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Cultural/Historical Resources (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

12d. FWP consulted with the State Historic Preservation office (SHPO) on this proposed project. A file records search conducted by SHPO did not indicate any known cultural resources within the proposed project area. If cultural artifacts were to be discovered during the course of the project, FWP would cease activities and contact SHPO, and potentially adjust the project design to avoid impacting these resources.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:						
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)						
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.						

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Significance Criteria (attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

PART III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATORS

1. Public Involvement

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current environmental assessment (EA):

- Public notices in each of these papers: *The Western News*, *The Daily Inter Lake*, *Helena Independent Record*
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Recent Public Notices")
- Copies of this EA may be obtained by mail from FWP Region 1 Office, 490 N. Meridian Road, Kalispell, MT 59901; by phoning 406-752-5501; or by emailing Stevie.Burton@mt.gov.

Comments should be directed by: mail to Tonya Chilton-Radandt, 385 Fish Hatchery Rd, Libby, MT 59923; phone to 406-293-4161 ext 209; or email to TChilton@mt.gov. Comments must be received by FWP no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 2, 2021.

Notice of this environmental assessment will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited impacts, many of which can be mitigated.

PART V. EA PREPARATION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No**
If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.

No. Based upon the above assessment which has identified a limited number of minor impacts to the physical and human environment that will be either for a short duration or that the effects of the proposed project can be mitigated below the level of significance, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

- 2. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Tonya Chilton-Radandt, Wildlife Biologist, Libby, MT, 406-293-4161, ext. 209
Jason Parke, Forester, Helena, MT, 406-444-7329

- 3. List of entities consulted during preparation of the EA**

State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT